

If HB 4932 would stop pedophiles from preying on kids I would support it with trumpets blowing. This bill will only do more harm to those that are obeying the laws pertaining to sex offenders. In Florida John Couey was a registered sex offender. He moved and did not report his move. In another case an offender cut off his tether. How will the State of Michigan monitor all these safety zones? I have asked that first date of entry on to the registry, or age at conviction be included in the information on the public registry as in time the registry will mislead the public and imply that the crime may have been committed recently. For Example if a person is convicted at 17 and is put on the registry with the victim being listed on the registry as 13 – 16. 10 years from now you will see a picture of a thirty-year-old person and the victim will still be listed as 13 – 16. I was told by a member of the Senate that although no one was opposed to it there is a budget crunch and it will have to wait until Michigan is back on it's feet economically. Where will the moneys come from to monitor the safety zones when there is no money available to add information to the registry that would give a clearer picture as to whether or not someone is a threat to children?

THE APPARENT PROBLEM (Paragraph taken from the legislative analysis of HB 5493)

“Reportedly, Lack of employment is the major factor influencing whether a person convicted of a crime will commit another one. Approximately two-thirds of all employers will not hire a person known to have a criminal record, and state law prohibits many people with even misdemeanor convictions for non-violent offenses from receiving occupational licenses. Lack of employment results in many of these people being forced to receive state aid, increases homelessness, and decreases the ability of non-custodial parents to pay child support.”

With this in mind, of the remaining one-third employers that will hire one with a record how many of those are within a safety zone? How will this legislation affect someone who works construction or other jobs where their job sites may move within a safety zone? Adding a safety zone affecting all on the registry will lead to further desperation of the offenders, crushing their hopes to put it all behind them and go on with their lives void of further humiliation. What is going to happen when someone on the registry is pushed to the breaking point? If they become homeless how will they register when they have no address to give? Where would we go to check on them? If they continue to lose jobs how will they survive? It is possible that one could be pushed to a life of crime just to survive. With too much free time on their hands overly stressed offenders could become more of a threat

to society then if they can find employment and provide food and housing for their families.

The problem with this bill isn't so much with the bill itself as it is with the registry. Our registry contains countless numbers of adolescents whose crime involved a consensual act with an under age partner. There are teens on the list that were unaware of their victim's real age because the victim lied about their age. Before you add a safety zone please, take a look at each individual case and remove the non-violent from the registry. This would allow the State to better utilize the moneys available by concentrating on those that truly pose a threat.

Cindy Russell



from the June 14, 2005 edition -

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0614/p08s02-comv.html>

Overreach Over Child Molesters

The Monitor's View

The abuse of a child by a sexual offender is a despicable crime, for which every parent and law enforcement officer ought to be on the alert.

Children, the most vulnerable members of society, depend on the care and wisdom of adults to protect them. It's because of that responsibility that so many state and local governments have been tightening laws relating to child molestation.

But as they go about drawing their security circles around children, these governments need to watch that they don't overreact:

- Last week, Miami Beach, Fla., banned convicted child molesters from moving to within 2,500 ft. of schools, school bus stops, day-care centers, parks, and playgrounds. It effectively bans sexual molesters from moving to the city.
- Vermont's governor is pushing to lock up certain violent criminals, including sexual offenders, in mental-health institutions indefinitely, after they've served their sentences. More than a dozen states have "civil commitment" laws for sex offenders.
- New York is considering lengthening the period that paroled sex offenders need to register their location with the state from 10 years to a lifetime. It's also looking at monitoring parolees electronically.

With measures like these, communities are applying solutions far more broadly than necessary.

The Miami Beach case, for instance, assumes that most child molesters are strangers to their victims: If the city just cordons off their children, they'll be safe. In fact, most victims are known to their abusers.

It's also important to remember that the rate of a repeat offense by a convicted child molester is low. "Sex offenders as a group have a relatively low recidivism rate. In fact, they have a lower recidivism rate than most other offenders," says John Q. La Fond, author of a new book, "Preventing Sexual Violence."

An extensive study by the Department of Justice published in 2003 shows a recidivism rate for child molesters of just 3.3 percent in the first three years. In almost half of the original offenses, the victim was the prisoner's relative.

Experts say it's possible to identify probable repeat molesters by looking at a person's history, behavior, and mental state. This argues for a selective approach, though governments might be tempted to define high-risk too broadly.

Still, instead of trying to keep tabs on every released offender, governments should target funds, personnel, and expertise to parolees in the high-risk group, monitoring them closely and working to rehabilitate them.

Public outrage and sorrow accompany cases of child sexual abuse. Governments should do all they can to prevent these crimes - and some of the predators do appear to be beyond current methods of rehabilitation. But the outrage shouldn't get in the way of trying to help the majority of abusers - many of whom were molested as children - redeem their lives.

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TheWMURChannel.com

Are Sex Offenders Being Pushed Too Far?

Sex Offenders Losing Jobs, Home Have More Free Time

POSTED: 2:40 pm EDT June 20, 2005

ALBANY, N.Y. -- The clamps are coming down on released sex offenders like never before.

Laws restrict where they can live, Web sites list their names, satellites track their steps. Neighbors and bosses force them from their homes and jobs.

The tightening of restrictions around the country comes after several recent slayings of children, allegedly by released sex offenders. The crackdown is aimed at protecting youngsters.

But some experts wonder sex offenders are being pushed so far to the fringes that they could actually become more dangerous to society.

Some researchers and treatment providers say that sex offenders are finding it harder to maintain homes and jobs and establish stable lives for themselves.

"I would rather have someone who has committed a sex offense be going to work every day, come home tired, have a sense of well-being that comes from having a regular paycheck and a safe home, as opposed to having a sex offender who has a lot of free time on his hands," said Richard Hamill, president of the New York State Alliance of Sex Offender Service Providers. "You tell me: Who is at a greater risk of reoffending?"

Sex offenders have always been pariahs. But it has become harder for them to slip back quietly into communities since states began adopting versions of Megan's Law a decade ago. The laws, named for Megan Kanka, a 7-year-old New Jersey girl who was killed by a neighbor in 1994, created public registries of convicted sex offenders.

In a study published this year, researchers surveyed 183 sex offenders in Florida and found 27 percent said they lost a job because a boss or co-workers found out about their crime, 20 percent had to move from their home because a landlord found out, 15 percent had to leave after neighbors complained, and 33 percent were threatened or harassed by neighbors.

"I feel trapped in living where I do," one of those surveyed said.

Another said: "I welcome an early death."

Co-author Jill Levenson, a professor at Lynn University in Florida, said "psychosocial stresses" have been linked to repeat offenses among criminals. Advocates fear the recent tightening of restrictions could add to their stress.

Some states now track selected sex offenders by global positioning satellite. After a registered sex offender was accused of killing a 9-year-old girl in Florida, the state passed a law requiring certain child molesters to submit to a lifetime of satellite tracking. Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm has said she wants state lawmakers to set up 1,000-foot "predator-free zones" around schools.

Earlier this month, Miami Beach, Fla., all but banned child molesters from moving there, adopting an ordinance barring them from living within 2,500 feet of schools, school bus stops, day care centers, parks or playgrounds.

A Houston-based company started offering subscribers "sex offender movement alerts" sent to their cell phones or e-mail to keep track of registered offenders in California, Texas and Florida. Six Flags announced it reserves the right to keep sex offenders out of its amusement parks.

Is it going too far? Maureen Kanka, who became an advocate for Megan's Laws after her daughter's slaying, said she sees the value in a balanced approach to dealing with sex offenders that includes treatment. But she said that providing information about offenders' whereabouts - whether through registries or tracking devices - should be the No. 1 priority.

"We have to provide that safety net for the public," she said.

Christopher Uggen, a professor of sociology at the University of Minnesota, noted that "sex offender" is a broad term that can include both a child molester and an 18-year-old with a 15-year-old girlfriend.

Uggen and Levenson said sweeping laws that treat all classes of offenders equally might not be the best way to protect the public. Limited public dollars would be better spent on targeting the most dangerous offenders, Levenson said.

"I don't think that we really earn that much with these blanket, one-size-fits-all policies," Levenson said. "They're going to be over-inclusive in some ways and not enough in other ways."

Previous Stories:

- June 6, 2005: Texas Developers Creating Sex-Offender-Free Neighborhood
- March 30, 2005: Schools Go High-Tech To Track Sex Offenders

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Sunday, May 29, 2005

Sex Offender Rule for Schools May Not Work

Proposed 1,000-foot 'predator-free zone' for schools deserves hard questions

The Detroit News

Sex offenders do pose a risk to society. But serious questions have to be asked about a proposal to create a 1,000-foot "predator-free zone" around all schools in the state.

The Detroit News recently reported that about 1,900 of the state's 19,000 registered sex offenders, or one in 10, lives near a school. But would a rule barring all offenders from living within 1,000 feet of a school really be an effective form of protection for the state's children?

More focused approaches on identifying, restricting and treating the most dangerous parolees with a history of child sex abuse may be a better way to handle the risk.

As John LaFond, a professor at the University of Missouri-Kansas City who has studied attempts to treat and control sex offenders, told The News, such proposals as the school zone can be "futile, costly and ineffective gestures to falsely assure the community that they're going to be safe."

LaFond told The News he was worried that get-tough proposals in a number of states would isolate sex offenders, removing them from home environments where they could get treatment and jobs, increasing the odds they could commit new offenses.

Such measures also could tie up resources that

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should be directed toward keeping a close watch on offenders who are most likely to perpetrate new crimes, he said. Not all sex offenders pose an equal level of risk, LaFond noted to The News.

Such zones would be hard to enforce. And would children at a given school be any safer if a known sex offender lived 1,020 feet from a school rather than 980 feet away?

Also, not all sex offenders have been caught and convicted. The 1,000-foot barrier, like the state's registry of sex offenders, may create a false sense of security.

And there is a basic civil liberties issue. The school zones and even the state's registry of sex offenders create a form of perpetual punishment that contradicts the notion of a prison term as payment of a debt to society, with former inmates being allowed a clean slate to remake their lives free of vigilantism and harassment.

Certainly, the worries of parents when a sex offender is in the neighborhood are legitimate and must be treated with respect. Plans for reassuring them might include concentrating on identifying those child molesters who pose the greatest threat of recidivism and devoting intensive resources on monitoring and treating them.

In addition, post-release treatment of any convicted child molesters might include ensuring they have appropriate jobs and forbidding them to hold such posts as child day care center worker, school bus driver or other school-related employee.

These procedures may be more effective in protecting children than a blanket zone around schools that makes no distinctions among offenders and may even be counterproductive.

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First-time offenders allowed off Megan's Law website

Posted 05/24/05

BAKERSFIELD - Hanford Assemblywoman Nicole Parra garnered a lot of praise last year for co-authoring a bill to put Megan's Law on the Internet, allowing parents to learn about registered sex offenders living in their neighborhood.

But Parra's bill also gave certain sex offenders a choice of opting out of the online system.

Debbie McMillan was appalled after learning from the Megan's Law website a registered sex offender lived in her neighborhood.

But when she tried to show it to a friend a few weeks later, the sex offender and his information had disappeared.

"That's crazy, that's insane," said McMillan. "I need the information as a parent."

It's legal because of a so-called opt-out clause, allowing some less-serious offenders to remove their information from the Internet.

"It narrows the list to really bad guys," said attorney Michael Rothschild.

Since the Megan's Law website began in the fall, the Attorney General's Office said nearly 2,700 misdemeanor offenders have already been granted exclusion from the site.

Another 7,300 have applied to opt-out.

In a news release, Parra said, "If there are issue with the

exemptions, they should be taken up with the Attorney General and the Department of Justice. The Megan's Law website provides valuable information, but like any tool, it is not perfect."

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